

A15WX (AGENCIES AND RADIO OUT)
(520)

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THE WORLD TODAY

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ASSOCIATED PRESS NEWS ANALYST

WASHINGTON, FEB. 20 (AP)-PUBLIC QUIZZING OF FRANCIS GARY POWERS, AFTER THE GOVERNMENT FINISHES QUESTIONING HIM, MIGHT MAKE HEADLINES FOR A FEW DAYS BUT PROBABLY WOULDN'T ILLUMINATE OR PROVE MUCH.

THERE HAVE BEEN SOME PERSISTENT QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CASE OF THIS 32-YEAR-OLD U2 PILOT WHOSE SPY PLANE WAS DOWNED WHILE ON A FLIGHT OVER RUSSIA MAY 1, 1960:

DID A RUSSIAN ROCKET BRING HIM DOWN? WHY DIDN'T HE DESTROY HIS PLANE TO KEEP IT AND ITS EQUIPMENT OUT OF RUSSIAN HANDS? WHY DID HE ADMIT HIS GUILT SO READILY AT HIS TRIAL?

POWERS ALREADY HAS ANSWERED SOME OF THEM, AND PRESIDENT KENNEDY HAS PUT A LIMIT ON HOW MUCH HE CAN SAY PUBLICLY.

THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN QUESTIONING POWERS, WITH THE PRESS KEPT AWAY, SINCE THE RUSSIANS RELEASED HIM AND HE RETURNED HERE OVER A WEEK AGO AFTER SERVING 21 MONTHS OF A 10-YEAR SENTENCE FOR SPYING.

ONCE THE GOVERNMENT HAS FINISHED, KENNEDY SAID LAST WEEK, POWERS "WILL GIVE WHATEVER INFORMATION WOULD BE IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST TO GIVE." THIS LIMITS WHAT HE CAN ANSWER.

THERE'S BEEN TALK, BUT NOTHING FINAL, ABOUT A FURTHER CONGRESSIONAL INVESTIGATION. THE CHAIRMEN OF A COUPLE OF SENATE COMMITTEES HAVE EXPRESSED INTEREST IN DIGGING DEEPER INTO HIS CASE. SOME OTHER SENATORS ARE RELUCTANT.

AS TO THE PERSISTENT QUESTIONS:

WHEN POWERS' PLANE STARTED DOWN, 1,200 MILES INSIDE RUSSIA, HE WAS SUPPOSEDLY FLYING AT 68,000 FEET, OR 12 MILES. THERE'S BEEN DOUBT THE RUSSIANS HAD A ROCKET GOOD ENOUGH TO BRING HIM DOWN FROM THAT HEIGHT.

AFTER POWERS' MOSCOW TRIAL PRAVDA PUBLISHED A LETTER IT SAID HE HAD WRITTEN TO CLEAR UP THE POINT OF WHY HIS PLANE WENT DOWN. IT QUOTED HIM AS SAYING:

HE DIDN'T FEEL ANY BLOW OF A DIRECT HIT BUT BELIEVED THE PLANE WAS WRECKED BY THE SHOCK WAVE OF AN EXPLOSION AND THOUGHT THE TAIL WAS BLOW OFF, FORCING THE PLANE TO NOSE DOWN, WITH THE WINGS THEN DROPPING OFF.

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WHY DIDN'T POWERS BLOW UP HIS PLANE, WHEN HE KNEW IT WAS GOING DOWN INSIDE RUSSIA, INSTEAD OF TAKING TO HIS PARACHUTE, AS HE SAID HE DID AT ABOUT 14,000 FEET?

AT HIS TRIAL POWERS DENIED HE WAS SUPPOSED TO BLOW UP THE PLANE.

THE RUSSIANS SUGGESTED AT THE TRIAL THAT HE WAS SUPPOSED TO COMMIT SUICIDE WITH A POISON NEEDLE THEY SAID THEY FOUND ON HIM. POWERS SAID THIS WAS TO BE USED ONLY IF, AFTER CAPTURE, HE WAS TORTURED AND COULDN'T STAND IT.

THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION--WHY DID HE EVER ADMIT AT HIS TRIAL HE WAS ON A SPYING MISSION OVER RUSSIA?--SEEMS SIMPLE ENOUGH. HE COULD HARDLY DENY IT WHEN THE AMERICAN STATE DEPARTMENT HAD ALREADY ADMITTED IT.

THERE'S NO ANSWER YET TO THIS QUESTION: WHY DID HE SEEM TO COOPERATE WITH THE RUSSIANS AT HIS TRIAL TO THE EXTENT OF SAYING "I REALIZE I COMMITTED A GRAVE CRIME" AND EXPRESSING REGRET HE HAD EVER MADE THE FLIGHT?

IT HAS BEEN REPORTED, BUT NOT PUBLICLY VERIFIED BY HIM, THAT HE WAS BRAINWASHED AND DRUGGED. THE ANSWER MIGHT BE AS NATURAL AS THIS: